



## Parent Involvement Task Force Recommendations Become Law

The South Carolina General Assembly has passed the "Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act". The legislation was patterned after the recommendations made by the Parent Involvement Task Force convened by the Education Oversight Committee. "We are thrilled with the passage of this act," said Task Force member, Betty Gregory. "Finally there is support and recognition of the key role parents play in their children's education."

School Improvement Councils are specifically mentioned in the act. School accreditation may now include an assessment of how the school's SIC is functioning in accordance with state requirements. Dr. Jean Norman, Executive Director of School Improvement Council Assistance, is pleased with the Act. "This new Act supports the work of SICA. We know what works and we'll assist schools to have effective SIC's," she said.

Dr. Norman considers the involvement of SIC's an essential element in student achievement. "Schools will find that involving parents and community in their day to day operations improves virtually everything, including access to resources, morale, and test scores," said Norman.

The new law requires state agencies to collaborate with each other and with schools to establish policies that assist parents in their efforts to be involved with their children's schools. The State Board of Education must require training for all school personnel in practices that improve the level of involved parents. The law directs local school boards to promote parent involvement through the implementation of parent-friendly

policies and through membership in national parent involvement organizations. It also requires the evaluations of superintendents by their local school boards and principals by their superintendents to contain a review of efforts to include parents in their children's education. The State Superintendent of Education is directed

*(see Parent Involvement page 2)*

## SC General Assembly Sets Expectations for Parents

In recognition of the influence parents have over their children's success in school, the state legislature incorporated the following expectations into the Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act.

- Uphold high expectations for academic achievement
- Expect and communicate expectations for success
- Recognize that parental involvement in middle and high school is equally as critical as in elementary school
- Ensure attendance and punctuality
- Attend parent-teacher conferences
- Monitor and check homework
- Communicate with the school and teachers
- Build partnerships with teachers to promote successful school experiences
- Attend, when possible, school events
- Model desirable behaviors
- Use encouraging words
- Stimulate thought and curiosity
- Show support for school expectations and efforts to increase student learning.

## Middle Grades Summit

Over 400 educators, policy makers, higher education faculty, and researchers gathered in Charleston for a two day Summit focused on the middle grades student. Governor Jim Hodges and Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum greeted those attending and assured them of continued support and attention to the issues of middle grades education.

Exciting and challenging national speakers were the backdrop to lively work sessions where participants grappled with the issues of organization, teacher quality, leadership, risk-taking, parent and community engagement, and curriculum concerns in math, science, social studies, and language arts.

### Overview

Kick-off keynoter **Dr. Howard Johnston**, professor at the University of South Florida, reminded his audience that "when the landscape is changing, you need a compass; not a map from the past." His recommendations:

- Create an attitude of pervasive caring, and do it carefully.
- Challenge the "regularities" of school for kids; stop doing what doesn't work and start doing what is the right thing for kids.
- Stop squandering moral authority and resources on trivia and promote broad, grand ideas of value.
- Teach like their future depends on it; stop teaching from our past and prepare students for the unknown.
- Make school the best place to be for these kids.

*(see Middle Grades page 4)*

(picture #1  
Reflex Blue)

*Participants at the Middle Grades Summit discuss how to engage parents during the middle years.*

## SICA & SC PTA Ask: *Can We Talk?*

No, this isn't a line from a routine by comic Joan Rivers; it's the name of an exciting new parent workshop from SC PTA. *Can We Talk?* (CWT?) is a fun, interactive, thought-provoking series of four workshops that helps parents gain the skills they need to initiate tough, but necessary conversations with their children. Intended for parents of children 7-15 years of age, the workshops provide parents with strategies for how to talk with their children about self-esteem, puberty and sexuality, mixed messages, and peer pressure. This workshop recognizes that parents are the experts when it comes to the family values they want their children to learn. They are not told what to say; instead parents learn methods of sharing their personal values with their children.

SICA and SC PTA will co-sponsor CWT? facilitator trainings in the Upstate, Pee Dee Region and Low Country (see page 5). Fifty people have already been trained to facilitate the workshops in South Carolina, but more are needed to ensure that CWT? is available to parents in all areas of the state. "The beauty of this program is not only that it works for parents and children, but that it is simple and easy to do," according to Dan Jepson who directs the project for SC PTA. "You don't have to be a teacher, a counselor or a health educator to lead this workshop, you only have to care about families and have the desire to do it."

SC PTA and SICA are working together to make this program available across the state *at no cost*. *Can We Talk?* is a wonderful way to give parents the tools they need to deal with issues that can put their children at risk, such as sexuality, alcohol and tobacco, and bullies," said Cassie Barber, Director of Program Services at SICA and a member of the CWT? Steering Committee. "We encourage SICs to partner with the local PTA to sponsor this workshop series for their school."

SC PTA is one of only three states to receive a generous grant from the National PTA to train facilitators and promote local workshops. Facilitators will receive a manual, workbook and video during the training. All parents attending the workshop series will receive workbooks to take home and share with their kids. The materials are very user-friendly and use an endearing cartoon family to demonstrate the strategies.

"We are really looking forward to working with the School Improvement Councils," said Kelli Kenison, CWT? Project Coordinator. "Our office is here to help you, whether you want to become a facilitator or find a facilitator to lead a workshop in your school, we'll help you make it happen." You can reach Kelli Kenison at (803) 695-0055 or [CanWeTalkSC@aol.com](mailto:CanWeTalkSC@aol.com).

### Parent Involvement...continued from page 1

to work with institutions of higher education to include parent involvement as part of teacher education. The State Board of Education is to promote parent involvement through professional development and require districts to include it in their long-range planning. The Education Oversight Committee is to promote public awareness of parent involvement and explore ways for employers to receive incentives or tax credits by implementing parent-friendly policies in the workplace. Other portions of the law, while not required, suggest the research based practice of assigning district and school staff to serve as parent liaisons and adjusting parent-teacher conference schedules to accommodate working parents and those without transportation. Legislators' expectations of parents' roles and responsibilities are detailed in a list of thirteen expectations, which were included in the final adoption of the act. (See box on Page 1.)



The Can We Talk? cartoon family.

## SCASA & SICA Offer Parent Involvement Seminar

In response to the passage of the new Parental Involvement in Their Children's Education Act (see page 1), the South Carolina Association of School Administrators (SCASA) and School Improvement Council Assistance (SICA) have teamed up to provide parent involvement training. The special seminar titled *The Next Step in Accountability: Parent Involvement*, will be held in four locations statewide (see page 5 for locations, times and dates). Participants will learn how to: identify school strategies to improve student achievement; create a school-wide parent involvement plan; develop their capacity to facilitate faculty and other groups; and identify state and national resources to support their school plan.

SICA Director, Dr. Jean Norman, will conduct the seminar. Registration is \$10 per person and includes materials and a light meal. To receive the greatest benefit from the seminar, each school is required to send a team with a **minimum of three** members including the principal. Other team members might include: lead teacher, parent liaison, SIC or PTA member, assistant principal, and guidance counselor. To register, send a check payable to SC Association of School Administrators and a list of your team members to: SCASA, 121 Westpark Blvd, Columbia, SC 29210. Deadline for registration is three days prior to seminar.



It was a good year for children and education in the SC General Assembly and an especially good year for School Improvement Council *Assistance*, which received additional funding in the amount of \$61,305. “We are grateful to the members of both the Senate and the House for their dedication to education this year,” said SICA Board Chair, d’Rue Hazel. “These funds will enable us to create regional offices to improve our service delivery statewide.”

Other significant state budget items include \$5 million to fully fund the middle schools initiative recommended by the Governor’s Middle Grades Task Force. These funds will enable local districts to assess their schools and direct the money to the areas of greatest need, which may include school resource officers, school nurses, guidance counselors and/or innovative programs.

In an attempt to address the teacher shortage, legislators passed an incentive they hope will encourage teachers who are approaching retirement to continue teaching a few more years. Teachers (and other state employees) may now retire after 28 years with full benefits. They may then opt to “retire” and have the state escrow (set aside) their retirement pay while they continue to teach for up to five years at full salary, then receive the escrow amount in a single payment.

Also passed was the omnibus teacher quality bill, S1111, which provides for the phase-in of middle grades certification and the addition of three professional development days to the teacher contract beginning in the 2001-2002 school year *provided that the General Assembly allocates the needed funding in future sessions*.

Governor Hodges’ early childhood initiative, First Steps, received \$10 million in additional funding which will ensure the availability of funds for implementation grants for all counties this year. All 46 counties have now received planning grants.

A bill to require schools to filter their internet services failed, but public libraries will be required to develop and post their policies regarding internet use. The bill also created a pilot project to test the use of filters in schools.

Changes to the Charter School Act stimulated much discussion this year, but a last minute compromise was nixed as House Speaker David Wilkins brought the gavel down and declared *sine die*, the end of the 2000 session, without taking a final vote.

## Thank Your Legislator

Legislators often hear from their constituents when they are unhappy about something, but positive actions often go unnoticed. A note or call thanking your senator and representative for their support of education is a great way to get to know them and show your appreciation for their work.

## Check Out More Websites



**Annie E. Casey Foundation:** [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org)

The national Kids Count Report is the premier activity of this foundation, which funds numerous activities to promote the health and well-being of the nation’s children. The national Kids Count Data book released in June rated South Carolina 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation – an improvement from previous years.

**SC Kids Count:** [www.ors.state.sc.us](http://www.ors.state.sc.us)

The South Carolina Kids Count Project is housed at the State Budget and Control Board. Visit their website and click on Kids Count to find individual county reports and lots of data specific to our state that is not found in the National Kids Count Data book.

**National Parent Teacher Association:** [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

Learn about programs, products, membership, national legislation affecting schools, and more on the PTA website. Lots of links to national child advocacy organizations and programs.

**Can We Talk?:** [www.canwetalk.org](http://www.canwetalk.org)

Find information on this terrific parent workshop profiled on page 2. Learn specific components of the program, how to get started, and resource information.

**SERVE:** [www.serve.org](http://www.serve.org)

Subtitled *Improving Learning through Research and Development*, this website addresses school improvement on the national level, including assessment, accountability, leadership, policy, standards and technology.



## Administrators Win Videos for Schools

The SICA staff was able to talk with many school administrators about effective councils in Myrtle Beach at the SC Association of School Administrators Summer Leadership Conference in June. Anyone stopping by the exhibit to get information and materials was eligible to enter their school in a random drawing to win a video.

Lillian Batarseh won *Involving Parents in Education* for Brockington Elementary, Florence School District #4

Susan Hughes won *Teaching to Learning Styles* for League Academy, Greenville School District.

Virginia Metts won *Effective Schools for Children at Risk* for Lakeview Elementary, Greenwood School District 50.



## Middle Grades...

*continued from Page 1*

**Dr. Paul George**, national authority on middle level education and professor at the University of Florida, outlined challenges that still remain.

- Only half the schools with “middle” in the name actually have the middle school concept in place.
- Do what we can to save 9th grade which is a formidable barrier to complete the middle concept.
- Do better on teacher and principal education; pay attention to succession planning to find, promote, and keep professionals.
- Recognize that advisee-advisor concept has failed but the kids still need it.
- Explore alternative grade configurations, being aware of the benefit to middle grades concept if 5th grade is present.
- Change how we teach recognizing the influence of media and its impact on the learning process.
- Proudly teach whoever comes, overcoming the issue of child poverty and addressing all kids in all circumstances.

### *Parent Engagement: Deliberate and Intentional*

Dr. Jean M. Norman, faculty at The University of South Carolina and director of SICA, led the work session entitled “Parent Engagement: What We Know and What We Do About It.” Four essential conditions found in SC middle schools having success in parent and community engagement were outlined.

- Relationships built upon the knowledge of each other (home and school), known expectations, and open communications.
- Leadership of the principal exhorting a vision which is supportive, deliberate and intentional.
- Faculty Commitment to try new practices, gain new skills, and collaborate with administration in the implementation of new practices focused on the child.
- School, Community Culture that promotes a positive public image and reputation, utilizes community resources, and creates supportive organizational structures.

Asked to make recommendations to achieve the four essentials in the state’s middle schools, the groups recommended: 1) relationship building through home visits, faculty and staff participation in community activities and functions, and a variety of positive personal contacts between the school and home. 2) Training for faculty and staff including the principal. 3) High level of consistency in the ways to communicate between the home and school including a parent liaison or coordinator and a location at the school for parents to identify as their own. Recognize technology’s role in communicating with parents: video tape events for parents and send a copy home with the student; use a phone mate or hotline for attendance, announcements, and homework assignments; and install e-mail, voice-mail and cell phones.

(picture #2  
Reflex Blue)

*SICA Executive Director, Jean Norman, awards a banner to Chester Middle School, a new member of the National Network of Partnership Schools.*

*Middle School Survey of Best Practices*  
SICA is compiling South Carolina’s best practices for parent engagement in middle schools. A survey will be mailed in September to every middle school principal to identify the practices that have improved parent engagement using the research framework of the National Network of Partnership Schools. This framework identifies six ways parents can become partners: basic parenting skills, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaboration with the community. Schools are asked to identify one practice in each area.

## SIC ACTION TIMELINE



### AUGUST

- Prepare and administer nomination process for parent and teacher elections to SIC.
- Review SIC bylaws and prepare draft suggestions for changes.
- Organize election process for parents, including ballots and alternative days to vote.
- Schedule parent election date and publicize nominees.
- Schedule teacher election date and publicize nominees.
- Schedule student election date and publicize nominees at the high school.

### SEPTEMBER

- Conduct elections for SIC (parents, teachers, students)
- SIC organizes according to bylaws; elect officers, assign committee membership
- New members receive copy of school improvement plan, annual update, bylaws
- Act on proposed bylaws changes
- 20 - SIC District Contacts meet in Columbia for annual training
- 27 - “The Next Step in Accountability: Parent Involvement” training at PeeDee Center, Florence
- 28 - “The Next Step in Accountability: Parent Involvement” training at Greenville Tech

### OCTOBER

- Election deadline: Oct. 15
- SIC membership forwarded to district office for transmittal to SICA
- SIC committee members gather information from faculty responsible for strategy implementation
- 19 - SIC State Meeting via satellite broadcast seen at each school; 7-8 pm
- 26 - “The Next Step in Accountability: Parent Involvement” training at Charleston Southern University

# Mark Your Calendar!



## The Next Step in Accountability: Parent Involvement

Co-sponsored with SC Association of School Administrators, see page 2 for description. School teams of three or more people will have four opportunities to attend the seminar. A light meal is included in the registration fee of \$10 per person. Contact SICA for more seminar details. Principals will receive a registration brochure or call SCASA, 803-798-8380 to register.

### Pee Dee

**September 27, 2000**

Pee Dee Education Center, Florence  
8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

### Upstate

**September 28, 2000**

Greenville Tech, Continuing Education/Dental Auditorium  
3:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

### Low Country

**October 26, 2000**

Charleston Southern University, North Charleston  
3:30 – 9:00 p.m.

### Midlands

**November 2, 2000**

SCASA offices, Columbia  
8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

## SIC State Meeting

**October 19, 2000**

7:00 – 8:00 p.m. via ETV Satellite

- Effective SIC Operations
- SIC Roles and Responsibilities
- New legislation update

## SIC District Contact Meeting

**September 20, 2000**

9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

SC History and Archives Center, Columbia

- SICA services to districts
- New SIC membership information collection system
- New communications materials

## SIC Principal/Chair Leadership

**October 12, 2000**

Co-sponsored by Olde English Consortium  
Winthrop University, Rock Hill  
5:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Light supper included.

## Teamwork Precedes Academic Success

**October 3, 2000**

Strategies to turn your SIC into an effective team.

Identify impediments and solutions.

Featuring Ako Kambon, Visionary Leadership Institute

Columbia location TBA

\$10 per person registration fee.

5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Light supper included.

## SIC Mini-Conferences

**Horry County**

**October 21, 2000**

9:00 a.m. – Noon

**Aiken County**

**November 16, 2000**

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

## Can We Talk? Facilitator Trainings

Sponsored by SC PTA and co-sponsored by SICA, this training includes meals, snacks and materials **at no cost** to participants.

All trainings will be conducted by Dominic Capello, developer of *Can We Talk?* and trainer for the PTA and National Education Association Health Information Network. Facilitators will leave the training ready to conduct the four-part parent workshops in their own communities. Hours are **6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Friday** and **9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday**. See article on

page two for full description. For more information or to register, call Kelli Kenison, Project Coordinator, 803-695-9955.

**September 15 & 16, 2000**

Dept. of Disabilities and Special Needs  
Midlands Center, Columbia

**October 13 & 14, 2000**

Charleston area, location TBA

**November 10 & 11, 2000**

Greenville area, location TBA

**January 26 & 27, 2001**

Pee Dee region, location TBA

## From the Back Porch to the Board Room: Finding Resources for Your School

**SICA Annual Conference**

**February 17, 2001**

Featuring storyteller Lorraine Johnson-Coleman, author of *Just Plain Folks*, and creator of the National Public Radio program of the same name.

Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center, Columbia

# For Your Information . . .

## New Book from PTA

In 1997, National PTA created *National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs* which are being adopted by school systems across the country and were used as the framework for the Parent Involvement Task Force. More than 50 national education organizations, including SICA, contributed to development of the Standards.

In January 2000 National PTA's book *Building Successful Partnerships: A Guide for Developing Parent and Family Involvement Programs* was published. It combines research with practical, proven strategies leading to successful implementation of the National Standards. This book would make an excellent addition to your school's staff development library. Cost is \$18.95. To order contact Rosalee Gentile, 312-670-6782 ext. 317 or email [r\\_gentile@pta.org](mailto:r_gentile@pta.org).

## Free "Tips" Booklet for Parents

As part of their statewide public awareness campaign on the importance of parent involvement, the Education Oversight Committee has published *Tips to Help Your Children Succeed in School*. This free booklet suggests ways parents may become more involved in their children's academic lives. Call toll-free, 1-877-349-2262 for your copy.

## And The Winner Is. . .



...South Carolina's education system. Many good things are happening in our schools and SICA salutes the award winning achievements of our schools, teachers, students, community members and administrators. Kudos!

### MILKEN FAMILY FOUNDATION NATIONAL EDUCATION AWARD

This honor includes a cash prize of \$25,000 awarded to: Steve Wash, a teacher at Batesburg-Leesville High, Lexington 3; Gary Burgess, principal at Pendleton High, Anderson 4; Yvette Barnes, a teacher at Allendale-Fairfax Middle, Allendale County; and Rick Burkhart of North Charleston High, Charleston County.

### NATIONAL BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL WINNERS

Hand Middle School, Richland 1; Pickens Middle School, Pickens County; R.P. Dawkins Middle School, Spartanburg 6; T.L. Hanna High School, Anderson 5.

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## SICA NEWS...

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